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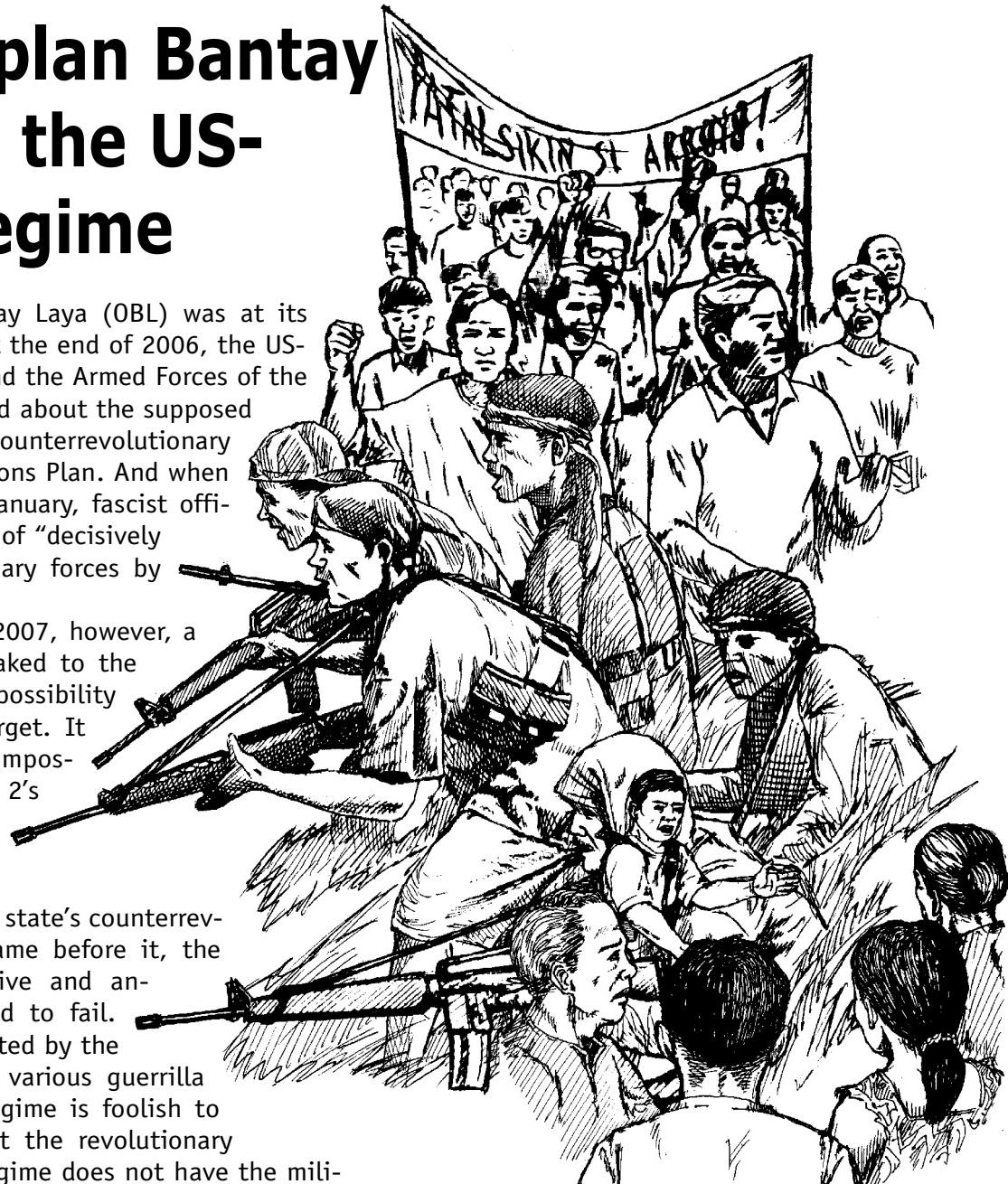
## Editorial

# Defeat Oplan Bantay Laya and the US-Arroyo regime

When Oplan Bantay Laya (OBL) was at its closing stages at the end of 2006, the US-Arroyo regime and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) bragged about the supposed success of its five-year counterrevolutionary Internal Security Operations Plan. And when OBL 2 was begun last January, fascist officials repeatedly boasted of "decisively defeating the revolutionary forces by 2010."

As early as October 2007, however, a secret AFP document leaked to the public admitted the impossibility of achieving OBL 2's target. It also acknowledged the impossibility of attaining OBL 2's target this year of crushing 12 guerrilla fronts.

Like all of the puppet state's counterrevolutionary plans that came before it, the unjust, brutal, destructive and antipeople OBL 2 is bound to fail. This has been demonstrated by the concrete experiences of various guerrilla fronts. The US-Arroyo regime is foolish to think that it can defeat the revolutionary movement. The ruling regime does not have the mili-



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tary, political or moral strength to stop the continued advance of the revolutionary movement and the armed struggle.

The revolutionary forces are accumulating important lessons both from the hardships they have experienced and the successes they have attained. These serve as crucial guideposts in the effort to thwart and eventually defeat the current OBL 2. (*See related article on the NEMR experience*)

That every counterrevolutionary oplan becomes more vicious than its predecessor is an indication of the ruling regime's growing desperation. OBL 1 and 2 nonetheless stand out for venting their brutality on the people in accordance with the fascist principle of "draining the water to catch the fish." The current regime completely disregards human rights and international humanitarian law with its mounting cases of killings, abductions, forcible evacuations, torture and other atrocities. Such violence is targeted not only against the revolutionary forces, but more

so against activists and civilians suspected of supporting the revolutionary movement.

OBL 2 causes greater suffering to ordinary civilians, disrupts their economic activities and worsens their already depressed conditions. Not a few communities have been attacked, bombed and forcibly displaced. Houses have been burned and farmlands destroyed to terrorize the people and force them to capitulate.

At the core of OBL 2 is the objective of stopping the people from fighting for their rights, their welfare and their future. OBL 2 defends the ruling government and system that exploit and oppress the broad masses of the people. The US-Arroyo regime uses OBL 2 to serve its narrow interest of latching on to power.

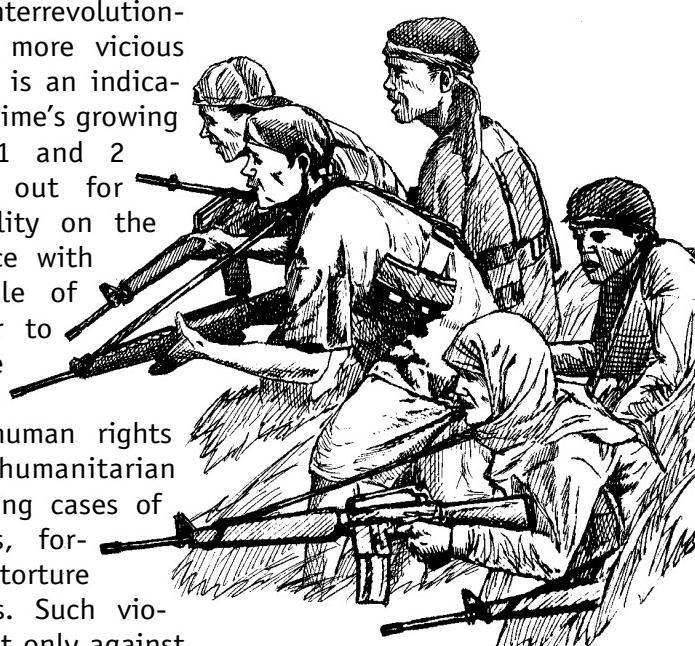
OBL 2 uses as terrorist instruments the reactionary military, fascist laws such as the Anti-Terror Law and government agencies that plan and direct "legal" offensives to shunt aside and suppress those considered as "enemies of the state." These instruments sow fascism and terror against the open, legal progressive and democratic forces and consistent anti-Arroyo oppositionists.

The US-Arroyo regime gains nothing in implementing OBL 2 but the people's utter hatred and its utmost isolation from the broad masses. It is the military's abuses and brutality that push the people to resist OBL 2 and the US-Arroyo regime's other vicious and repressive acts. The US-Arroyo regime has likewise earned the opprobrium of the international community.

A number of politicians within the ruling coalition are already taking a stand against the Arroyo clique. Even the Supreme Court has made landmark decisions thwarting the regime's fascist campaign. More and more elements from the state's armed forces can no longer stomach the regime's corruption, the people's sufferings and the way the regime has been using them to violently suppress the people.

The people are increasingly determined to resist, frustrate and overthrow the US-Arroyo regime. They and their army will defeat OBL 2 and the rotten regime that is behind this utterly brutal counterrevolutionary scheme.

AB



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# OBL 2 is a failure in Northeastern Mindanao

The sustained military operations launched by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the Northeastern Mindanao Region (NEMR) from January to June 2007 are a failure. Despite all the personnel and war materiel utilized by the AFP, they failed to crush Guerrilla Front 14 (GF 14)—one of Oplan Bantay Laya 2's main targets—or any other front in the region.

Not only was the New People's Army (NPA) able to preserve itself, it eventually succeeded in seizing the initiative, overcoming its weaknesses, launching tactical offensives and inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy in the process and expanding its revolutionary work.

**Military siege.** The AFP launched OBL 2 in NEMR in January 2007, inflicting heavy losses in its areas of concentration in the next six months.

In accordance with its tactic of laying siege and launching sustained operations in an area, the AFP poured in 1,500 troops at the beginning of the campaign. It deployed the Philippine Army 401st and 402nd Bde in strategic municipalities in NEMR and along its borders with neighboring regions. These battalions coordinated with artillery units and light armored units under the two brigades' operational control.

In the operation's entire duration, the AFP poured in four battalions (the 36th IB, 58th IB, 29th IB and the 23rd IB which is considered the 401st Bde's cadre battalion), three Division Reconnaissance Companies (41st DRC, 42nd DRC and 43rd DRC), Scout Rangers, Military Intelligence Battalions (MIB) and the 2nd Special Forces which had come all the way from Sulu. The AFP even added in Special Ac-

tion Forces from the Philippine National Police. Even troops from the 73rd IB and 60th IB under the 10th ID which are deployed in Southern Mindanao were utilized in military operations in the region.

The military's special units used modern weapons such as 66 mm rocket launchers. Each unit was equipped with night vision goggles and night vision scopes (NVS/NVG) for night time surveillance and encounters. Their troops were backed up by cannons, modern electronic surveillance equipment, OV-10 bombers and helicopter gunships for transportation support, air surveillance, air strikes and combat support.

The AFP set up camps in what it called the "key hole," or area deemed as the bastion of the revolutionary movement in the entire guerrilla front. The camps served as

patrol bases and were equipped with modern surveillance equipment such as communications satellites, cellphone trackers, computers and the like.

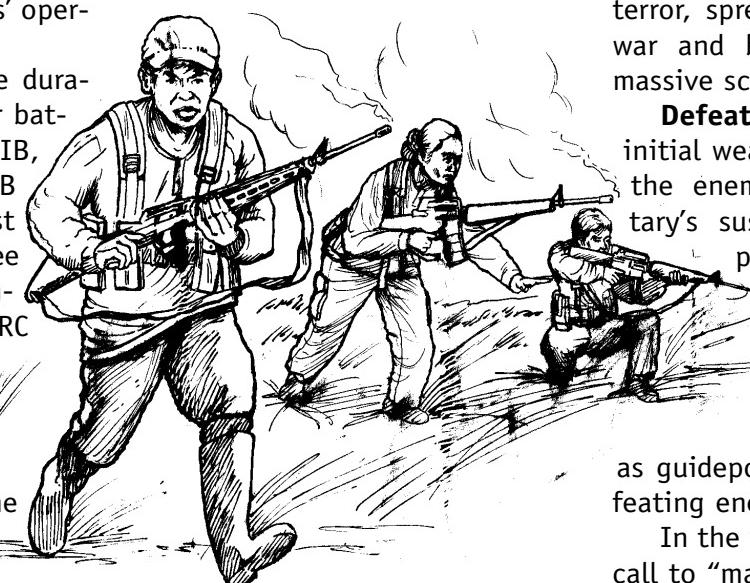
The area around the "key hole" was constantly under patrol to keep NPA units at bay. Several columns (platoons and companies) were deployed around the guerrilla front, often using the Scout Rangers' commando tactics. At the height of the operation, more than 20 columns simultaneously launched operations within and around GF 14. Other military units were also on the prowl in other guerrilla fronts in the region.

The enemy launched vicious fascist attacks in civilian communities to terrorize the people. It undertook arbitrary arrests, hit communities with artillery fire and bombs, destroyed residents' properties and set up checkpoints and imposed food blockades. Two activists were killed and two others were seriously wounded. Thousands of people living in the area sustained losses, had their livelihoods and houses ruined and their organizations dismantled.

The AFP mobilized traitors and agents recruited from the localities against the people and the revolution. The enemy was able to sow terror, spread disinformation, psy-war and black propaganda on a massive scale.

**Defeating the siege.** Despite initial weaknesses in dealing with the enemy siege and the military's sustained operations, the people's army led by Party cadres was quickly able to cope. The Party immediately drew fundamental and particular lessons that served as guideposts in resisting and defeating enemy operations.

In the process of rallying to the call to "maintain the politico-mili-



tary initiative to defeat OBL 2," a number of weaknesses emerged in preparing for and confronting the enemy's attacks. All-out efforts were made to overcome these weaknesses and consolidate the Party and the NPA. There were likewise thoroughgoing attempts to hone the NPA's abilities to wage guerrilla warfare, to wage defense, launch tactical offensives and mobilize the masses. The regional leadership issued the documents "Conscious and strict enforcement of the basic military orientation" and "Conducting combat drills" to address and resolve these weaknesses.

By June, the region had summed up its experiences and come out with a document entitled "Continuing efforts to defeat OBL II" that contained lessons from the previous campaign.

At the time OBL 2 was in progress, the NPA was able to launch a total of 27 tactical offensives, killing up to 63 enemy troops and wounding 21 military forces. It was also able to seize a number of weapons.

After the six-month siege and sustained operations in the region, the enemy failed to destroy GF 14 or any other guerrilla front in NEMR. The AFP was unable to come out with grandiose proclamations that it had "crushed" the front. Most of the enemy troops withdrew with their heads hanging, leaving the 36th IB behind to launch sporadic operations.

While NPA units within GF 14 played hide-and-seek with the enemy's numerically superior forces, adjacent guerrilla fronts within and outside the region that had no heavy enemy troop concentrations maintained the momentum in their revolutionary work. On the overall, NPA units and revolutionary mass organizations in these fronts gained strength. Tactical offensives

that inflicted many casualties on the enemy in other guerrilla fronts as well as in other regions in Mindanao divided the enemy's attention and strength.

These victories were attained because of the revolutionary movement's strong and solid foundation in the guerrilla front and region, its unwavering revolutionary standpoint and the revolutionary forces and masses' courage and readiness to wage painstaking struggle and bear the necessary hardships and sacrifices in the face of intense attack by the enemy.

Support from the people continued to pour in despite the hardships suffered. All NPA units within GF 14 were able to preserve their strength and quickly and easily resumed their tasks of building the mass base and advancing agrarian revolution along with conducting

vigorous military work.

**Learning lessons and overcoming weaknesses.** Due to certain weaknesses at the beginning, especially during OBL 2's first months in the region, the NPA suffered 10 defensive actions and twice was at the receiving end of the enemy's harassment operations. A Red fighter was killed, two others were wounded and another two captured in these defensives. The NPA also lost a number of rifles, explosives and other war materiel to the enemy.

The region gave a delayed response to OBL 2 because it failed to make a timely in-depth study of this enemy strategy. It was unable to make a prompt reading of OBL 2's initiation and its movements within the region upon its launching in January. There was no detailed study of the enemy forces' siege tactics, how many soldiers

## NPA military actions in Surigao del Sur

**T**he New People's Army (NPA) in Guerrilla Front 19-A and -B launched successive military actions in Surigao del Sur amid intense military operations by the AFP in the second half of November. All in all, three enemy platoons were paralyzed by the NPA in these armed actions.

**November 30.** NPA elements ambushed the 58th IB Recondo Platoon at Km. 16, Sitio Manluy-a, Diatagon, Surigao del Sur at around 8 p.m., killing one soldier and wounding 15 others, including 2nd Lieutenant Sison. There were no casualties on the NPA side.

**November 24.** NPA Red fighters sniped at elements of the 58th IB at Km. 15, Artimco Road in Cagwait town.

At 2 p.m., an NPA team sniped at 58th IB forces in Sitio Hanyaan, wounding a Sergeant Dumandan.

Earlier, at 10 a.m., the NPA detonated a bomb along the path being taken by a platoon from the 58th IB in Sitio Hanyaan. Twelve soldiers were wounded and taken for medical treatment to Butuan City. The military admitted to losing two of its soldiers, but the NPA received information that up to five troopers were killed. The Red fighters suffered zero casualties.

**November 21.** Red fighters sniped at and killed an intelligence operative from the 58th IB in Sitio Manluy-a.

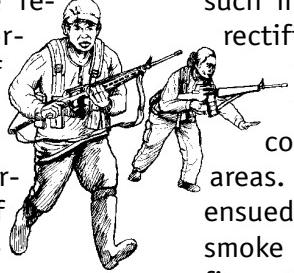
AB

were being employed, where the attacks were focused and what the first target would be and what the enemy's methods of operation were.

The regional Party leadership and NPA command later studied the situation and launched a campaign to address OBL 2.

To overcome the Red fighters' lack of training, the regional leadership ordered the conduct of crash courses to raise the NPA's basic military skills. It also ordered the conduct of special skills trainings in sniping and commando operations, among others.

The Red fighters' political and ideological foundations were strengthened to enable them to overcome their laxity with respect to observing military regulations and discipline. This also helped them overcome the hardships and sacrifices amid the enemy's sus-



tained operations.

Necessary adjustments were made in the NPA units' guerrilla movements to cope with and render useless the modern surveillance equipment and advanced technology being utilized by the enemy such as NVG/NVS and avoid defensive actions. At first, the guerrillas knew little about the workings of such modern equipment. This was rectified by adopting new regulations such as prohibiting the use of firewood for cooking in sparsely populated areas. Many defensive actions had ensued after the enemy sighted smoke in the daytime and camp fires at night.

In compliance with directives from the national leadership, a new system of communication was set up relying on a broad support network and the mobilization of the masses. This was done to overcome security problems arising from an overreliance on cellphones which are subjected to strict surveillance

by the enemy.

The regional leadership also cited the need for more numerous and more secure caches for war materiel and the need to stock up on supplies in various strategic areas of the guerrilla front to prepare for long-term enemy operations.

There is likewise a need to prepare the mass base early on to resist direct enemy assaults, deception and psywar. The regional leadership stressed the need to consolidate mass organizations and units and forces of the people's militia in order to mobilize them to resist enemy operations.

It is also necessary to wage resistance against the enemy by launching mass actions, conducting propaganda and issuing calls to the public. Neglect in these areas afforded the enemy the opportunity to spread black propaganda. There is need to set up a system for the quick flow of information in order to effectively belie the enemy's psywar and smear campaigns. **AB**

## NPA seizes 15 firearms in Bukidnon

A unit under the NPA Rexan Perez Command seized 15 firearms of various caliber in simultaneous raids on a hog farm owned by Rey Ma and a poultry farm operated by Limbo and Tyson Farms in Barangay Patpat, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon on December 7. The Red fighters seized a carbine, two cal. .22 pistols, five shotguns, six cal. .38 revolvers and a cal. .45 pistol.

The NPA admonished the owners of these businesses to respect the rights of their workers. Aside from being paid slave wages, the workers at the hog and poultry farms are often abused and terrorized by the guards. **AB**

## Victorious NPA offensives in Southern Tagalog

Red fighters killed 10 enemy troopers, wounded at least nine others and downed a helicopter in three separate armed actions in Palawan, Rizal and Laguna this month.

**December 16.** Three soldiers were killed in an NPA ambush on troops of the Marine Battalion Landing Team 9 in Barangay Binaga, San Vicente, Palawan at around 7 a.m. The Communist Party of the Philippines congratulated the NPA in Palawan for the successful military action. "The Palawan ambush is the NPA's response to continuing offensive military operations by the AFP and the Arroyo regime's hypocritical

declaration of a sham 22-day unilateral ceasefire," said CPP spokesperson Gregorio Rosal.

**December 14.** Four soldiers were killed and nine wounded after guerrillas of the NPA Mario Corpuz Command shot down a Philippine Air Force Huey helicopter in Tanay, Rizal.

**December 7.** A platoon under the NPA Mario Corpuz Command ambushed a squad of the 16th IB aboard an M-35 truck in Sitio Kamagong, Barangay Cueva, Sta. Maria, Laguna at around 2 p.m. Three soldiers were killed and an undetermined number wounded. There were no casualties on the NPA side. **AB**



# Intensifying militarization in the countryside

**A**rroyo's butchers are on a relentless killing rampage, targeting mass leaders and supporters of the progressive movement. This December, a propeople town councilor was gunned down in his office in Masbate. In Quezon and Surigao, thousands of people, including children have been displaced due to militarization. In Compostela Valley, a labor leader was subjected to death threats. Meanwhile, two suspected Communist Party cadres were seized and tortured in Nueva Ecija in the last week of November.

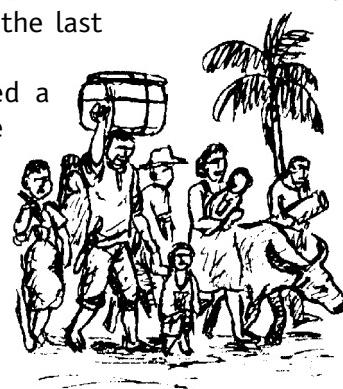
**December 16.** Joel Cuyos, president of the Nagkahiusang Mamumuo sa San Jose-National Federation of Labor Unions-Kilusang Mayo Uno received death threats through text messages on his cell-phone. Three suspicious-looking men were also seen that day casing the Sumitomo Fruits Corp. plant where he works. Cuyos' union is in the middle of negotiations with management on the workers' demands.

**December 11.** Hundreds of Agta tribespeople from General Nakar town in Quezon have been forced to evacuate their homes

since the military launched a series of offensives in the first week of December. The Agta were angered when the military forcibly recruited the menfolk to join the Citizens' Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

Meanwhile, Karapatan-Southern Tagalog reported that more than 9,000 children in Quezon have become internal refugees since the first week of December. They have been forced to leave their homes due to grave military abuses against their fami-

lies, many of whom suffered intimidation, harassment and torture. The soldiers had been summoning the children's parents for interrogation three time a month. Those who failed to report to the military camp were accused of being NPA members.



The child victims of militarization who have been forced to stop schooling are from the towns of General Luna, Agda-ngan and Lopez, Quezon. The military has put up a detachment near the school at Barangay Malaya, General Luna, turning the area into a virtual war zone. A number of children have also been incarcerated with their parents who are being ac-

## Death squad agent killed

**A**n intelligence agent involved in the assassination of a mass leader in Bicol was killed as he resisted a team from the New People's Army (NPA) with orders to arrest him and bring him to trial. Expedito Ribaya, the main project and intelligence officer in the December 31, 2006 slaying of Bayan Muna-Bicol regional coordinator Rodolfo "Ompong" Alvarez was killed December 12 in Ligao City, Albay.

The revolutionary people's court in Albay had ordered Ribaya's arrest after an in-depth investigation by the Santos Binamera Command (NPA-Albay) revealed that he directly conspired with a military

death squad to surveil Alvarado's activities. When the death squad saw its opportunity to assassinate Alvarado, it was Ribaya himself who served as the last lookout before Alvarado was gunned down.

The NPA-Albay's investigation moreover revealed that Ribaya was an active intelligence operative and coddled known military agents while he worked at the Civil Security Unit under former Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales. He closely coordinated with an intelligence unit based at the 65th IB headquarters in Tula-Tula, Ligao City that doubled as a military death squad.

Almost a year had passed since

Alvarado's assassination, but the police could not even come up with a single suspect. Ribaya had used his political connections and influence and the AFP's protection to cover up the crime.

In a statement, NPA-Albay spokesperson Ka Florante Orobio said "nothing can be concealed from the revolutionary movement which enjoys the broad support of the people and uses scientific methods of analysis and investigation."

"This is a major victory for the relatives and friends of victims of extrajudicial killings under the criminal fascist US-Arroyo regime," said Orobio. AB



cused of being NPA members or sympathizers.

**December 7.** A sniper killed Dimaslang, Masbate vice mayor Regolo Moran in his office. Two of his employees were also seriously wounded. Moran has been condemning the series of killings of activists for the past six years. He was scheduled to lead a rally for the advancement of human rights last December 10.

**November 28.** Ten elements from a composite force of the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Army 7th ID abducted Emeterio Antalan and Edgardo Friginal in Pulong Bomba, Barangay Dimaslang Norte, Talavera, Nueva Ecija. Antalan and Friginal are both suspected of being CPP cadres.

Witnesses said the military tied the victims' hands behind their backs, beat them up, kicked them and hit them with rifle butts. They were blindfolded and forced into a white van with plate number NUK 899 that sped off towards the direction of Barangay San Ricardo, Talavera. The AFP admitted having custody of the two victims only after four days. Signs of beatings and other torture were still visible on Antalan and Friginal's bodies when their relatives went to see them at the Nueva Ecija Provincial Jail last December 3. Although their case is political in nature, they have been charged with multiple murder, theft and arson.

**Virtual martial law in Eastern Visayas.** There were 139 cases of human rights violations victimizing 5,486 individuals, 916 families and 12 communities in Eastern Visayas in 2007, said KATUNGOD-Sinirangan Bisaya. The most heinous case involved the massacre of seven farmers in Barangay San

Agustin, Palo, Leyte by elements of the 19th IB. Among the victims was Alma Bartoline and her unborn child.

Another despicable crime by the AFP was the burning by 62nd IB elements of peasants' houses in Sitio Ogbok, Barangay Villa Aurora, Basey, Samar and Barangay Sinalangtan, Calbiga, Samar. The fire razed all of the peasants' belongings.

The 62nd IB claimed last December 10 that Barangay Villa Aurora is one of five villages where the military has recovered lands allegedly confiscated and turned into communal farms by the revolutionary movement. The military has since boasted of having returned the land to the owners. The farmer-victims of arson were said to be the tillers of these lands.

Entire families were likewise arrested and imprisoned in Eastern Visayas. One case in point is that of couple Dominador Doque and Divina Belanigue and their year-old child who continue to be detained at the 62nd IB camp under Lt. Col. Jonathan Ponce.

KATUNGOD-SB said that with the severity of human rights violations, virtual martial law exists in the whole of Eastern Visayas.

**A series of blows on the people of Surigao del Sur.** In Surigao del Sur, more than 400 residents including children from Sitio Kilometer 22, Barangay Anahao Daan, Tago have taken refuge in abandoned huts in Barangay Parina. On the other hand, more than 100 lumad from Barangay Lagangan are cramped inside the barangay hall in Carac-an, Tago due to renewed military offensives by the AFP. Prior to this, more than 3,000 resi-

dents had been forced to evacuate due to intensive military operations.

The barriofolk left their communities after soldiers conducting military operations aimed their guns at them everytime they passed by their fields. The soldiers, who ransacked their homes and stole their crops also ordered them to leave their houses so the military could use them as camps.

The evacuees now face hunger and other hardships as officials of Barangay Anahao Daan are unable to provide for their needs. Reports say 53 children are currently suffering from severe cough, colds, diarrhea and eye disorders.

The evacuees stressed that they would only go home after the soldiers leave, ignoring calls by Col. Francisco Mendoza who heads the operating troops of the 58th IB. They said they did not want to see a repeat of an incident last May 2005 where eight peasants who were forced to serve as guides for the military were never heard from again. Another peasant, Jessie Bacasmas, was arbitrarily gunned down while loading belongings onto a truck full of evacuees. They said that as long as the military operation continues and hundreds of troops are deployed in their barangays, they will never be safe from military abuses.

Elements of the 58th IB have been conducting military operations for more than a month in the towns of Lianga, San Agustin, Tago and San Miguel, Surigao del Sur. The operations are a desperate attempt by the 401st Infantry Brigade under Col. Jose Vizcarra to crush the armed revolutionary movement in the area by 2010.





## Colonel Buan, 5 others indicted

Col. Noel Buan, head of the Philippine Army Internal Security Group (ISG), along with five others, has been formally indicted before the People's Court for the April 12 abduction of Ma. Luisa Posa-Dominado and Nilo Arado and the frustrated murder of Leebay Garachico. The People's Court has also ordered the Coronacion "Waling-waling" Chiva Regional Operational Command (NPA-Panay) to arrest the subjects of the indictment and bring them to trial.

NPA-Panay spokesperson Ka Julian Paisano said that aside from Buan, the following have also been indicted: Col. Mariano Perez, head of the Military Intelligence Battalion (MIB) of the 3rd Infantry Division (ID), Philippine Army; Maj. Gen. Juvenal Narciso, 3rd ID chief; Capt. Lowel Gil Marquez, 3rd ID spokesperson; and Demetrio "Hugo" Capilastique of the RPA, which serves as a special CAFGU under the military. Also named were Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; Sec. Norberto Gonzales; and a number of "John Does" likewise involved in the abduction.

Communist Party of the Philippines spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal has informed the People's Court in Panay that copies of the indictment sheet have already been submitted to the Party national leadership and the National Operational Command of the New People's Army. Concerned national and regional authorities have also received their own copies for purposes of implementing formal judicial processes and police action. Rosal urged the subjects of the indictment to appear before the People's Court and submit their affidavits in order to air their side.

Colonels Buan and Perez are accused of leading Dominado and Arado's abduction and the attempt on Garachico's life. Capilastique led the death squad that actually undertook the abduction and murder attempt. General Narciso and Captain Marquez, on the other hand, are accused of inciting the commission of the crime and covering it up, just as they had incited the abduction and slaying of many other leaders and activists of legal mass organizations and parties.

Among those who provided information and testimonies leading to the indictment of Colonel Buan and the others are government employees and a number of active personnel of the Philippine Army. Colonel Buan has also reportedly been involved in the formation of death squads and the liquidation of leaders of the revolutionary movement in Panay since his deployment to the island.

Colonel Buan was formerly a prisoner of war of the NPA in Mindoro held for espionage and other war crimes. He was released in 2001 on humanitarian grounds as part of a confidence-building measure in peace negotiations with the Arroyo regime. Rosal said Buan has failed to reciprocate the NPA and the revolutionary movement's act of goodwill. AB

## No justice under the Arroyo regime

International Human Rights Day was commemorated in various areas in the country on December 10.

In Manila, some 2,000 people manifested their sentiments against human rights violations through their placards and streamers. Some wore masks corresponding to each letter in the word "justice."

Police backed up by two firetrucks blocked the demonstrators a few meters before they reached Malacañang. The marchers continued their program along Morayta St. in Sampaloc.

One of the speakers, Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño said the Filipino people could never attain the justice they have long desired so long as the Arroyo regime remains in power. Marie Hilao-Enriquez of Karapatan said justice can only be attained if the current administration is removed from power.

Marches and rallies were also held in Negros, Panay and the cities of Cebu and Davao. A short *lakbayan* sponsored by the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas in Negros was joined by 1,500 people from BAYAN's affiliate organizations. In a gathering in Bacolod City, a statement from the Negros-born NDFP peace negotiating panel chief Ka Luis Jalandoni was read before the crowd. Jalandoni called for the organization and mobilization of thousands of people to struggle for and defend human rights.

In Panay, 3,600 activists marched in Iloilo City, Roxas City and Kalibo, Aklan. They assailed the government's counterrevolutionary policies that lie at the root of the relentless killings and abduction of activists. BAYAN and Bayan Muna led protest actions in the cities of Cebu and Davao.

In Mindanao, Bishop Delfin Callao of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Ustadz Mohammad Tee, Ustadz Wilson Miranda and Amirah Ali-Lidasan of the Suara



Bangsamoro Party and other allied organizations signed a statement assailing the US-Arroyo regime's "all-out war" against the revolutionary forces and their suspected mass bases. They bewailed the fact that Christian, Moro and Lumad communities were being targeted by strike operations, psywar and intelligence activities in the guise of "counter-terrorism"

and "counterinsurgency" programs.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) said it is difficult, if not impossible for the Arroyo government to enjoy the confidence and respect of the public because of its record of widespread human rights abuses. AB

## Seven years of plunder

**P**ulse Asia published on December 11 the results of its survey stating that 42% of respondents believe that Gloria Arroyo is the country's most corrupt president. The respondents chose among presidents beginning with Ferdinand Marcos. Arroyo fared worse than Marcos who was chosen by 35% of respondents.

On the other hand, Transparency International published a report on December 6 stating that the Philippines is among the top 10 countries in the world with the biggest number of bribery cases.

The reports reflect the severity of corruption in the country. Following are the biggest plunder cases involving Arroyo, her family and cronies since 2001:

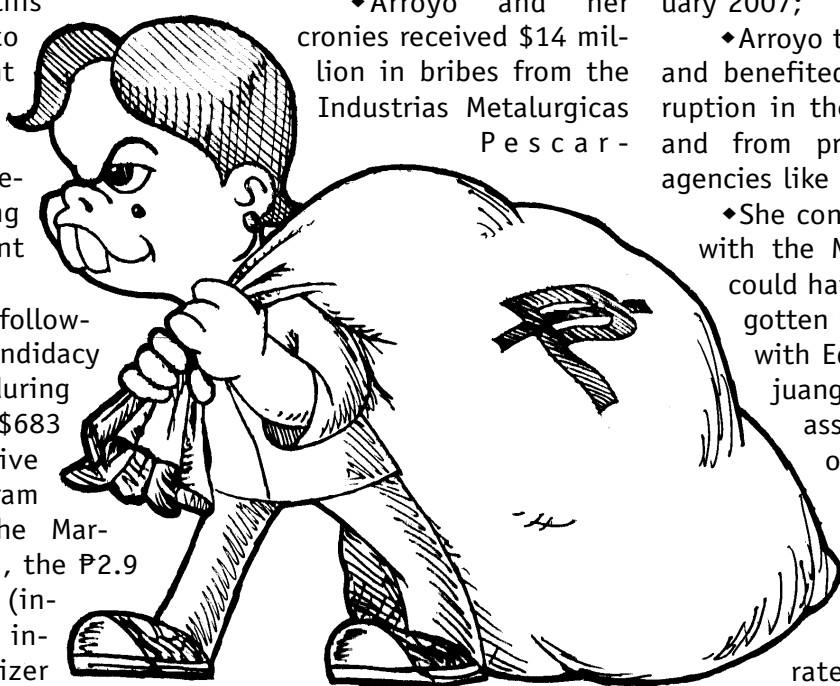
- ♦ Arroyo used her pork barrel funds to buy the support of congressmen, bribed governors, congressmen and mayors this October with up to ₱500,000 and brought 200 cronies and their families with her on a junket to Europe to reward them for junking the third impeachment case against her;

- ♦ Arroyo used the following to advance her candidacy and perpetrate fraud during the 2004 elections: the \$683 million Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program fund (sourced from the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth), the ₱2.9 billion agricultural fund (including ₱728 million involved in the fertilizer

scam), the ₱4 billion Philhealth fund and ₱4 billion from the Road Users' Tax; ₱36 million from the Jose Pidal account and ₱200 million from the spurious Lualhati Foundation;

- ♦ She spent the following to perpetrate fraud during the 2007 elections: the ₱8 billion food-for-school program fund and ₱1 billion from the Philippine National Oil Company and National Development Corporation's fund for the bogus jathropa planting program;

- ♦ Arroyo and her cronies received \$14 million in bribes from the Industrias Metalurgicas Pescar-



mona Sociedad Anonima for the rehabilitation of the Caliraya Power Plant; another \$14 million from the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. Inc. for the construction of NAIA Terminal 3; and millions of pesos from jueteng. She would have gotten \$130 million from ZTE Corp. had the national broadband network program pushed through;

- ♦ She received ₱533 million in kickbacks from the construction of the overpriced Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard and another ₱500 million kickback from the purchase of automated counting machines from Mega-Pacific Corporation. She overpriced the \$503 million North Rail Transit contract; and the more than ₱1 billion expenditure package for the ASEAN Summit in January 2007;

- ♦ Arroyo turned a blind eye to, and benefited from, rampant corruption in the military and police and from profitable government agencies like GSIS and PAGCOR;

- ♦ She continues to strike deals with the Marcos family so she could have a share of their ill-gotten wealth, and connived with Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco to enable him to assume full ownership of the disputed 27% of San Miguel Corporation shares;

- ♦ Arroyo allowed Meralco to raise electricity rates in 2003 in ex-

change for the Lopez family's support for her candidacy in 2004;

- ♦ She attempted to bribe bishops of the Catholic church;

- ♦ She granted YNN Pacific Consortium Inc. the right to purchase the Masinloc Power Plant merely on the basis of its connections to her;

- ♦ Arroyo squandered ₱5 billion from the funds of the Office of the President and forced the addition to the 2006 national budget of ₱3 billion for the Kilos Asenso Support Fund and ₱3.69 billion for the Kalayaan Barangay Fund, which are both directly con-

trolled by Arroyo's office;

- ♦ She allowed her key officials, among them National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales to accumulate up to ₱2 billion in questionable expenditures and millions of pesos in unliquidated cash advances;

- ♦ Her husband Mike Arroyo gave ₱48 million to his mistress and her relatives;

- ♦ Arroyo's brother Diosdado Macapagal Jr. manipulated the bidding for the sale of the National Transmission Corp. for \$3.95 billion (less than half of its actual value) to favor the Monte Oro Grid Resources which has connections to Arroyo family cronies En-

## World Bank suspends project loan

The World Bank suspended a \$232 billion loan to the Philippine government for road construction, citing irregularities in the projects' implementation.

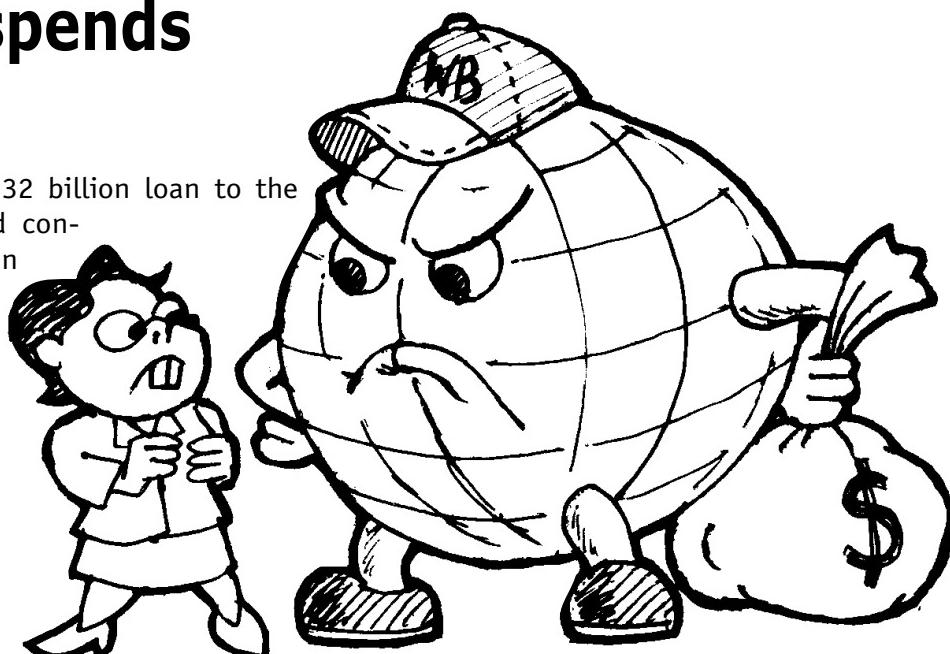
The WB leadership postponed the second phase of the National Roads Improvement and Management Program (NRIMP) for the Philippines while awaiting the results of an internal investigation on the anomalies discovered.

Between 2002 and 2006, the WB disapproved two huge contracts under the NRIMP's first phase due to striking indications of a conspiracy to overbid the projects.

Four Chinese companies and a local company were involved in the anomalous contracts—China State Construction Engineering Corp., China Road & Bridge Corp., China Geo-engineering Corp., China Wu Yi Co. Ltd. and E.C. de Luna Construction Corp.

The Arroyo government was hard put trying to cover up the shameful circumstances behind the loans' suspension, so much so that administration apologists ended up issuing laughable statements.

Department of Public Works and Highways secretary Hermogenes



Ebdane was even caught in a lie when he said that he had already ordered an investigation of the anomalous bidding. He was speechless when pressed for details of the so-called probe. His statements also contradicted those of Finance Sec. Margarito Teves last April stating that the WB had duly informed the government of the internal investigation it was conducting.

It turns out that Ebdane's "investigation" was no different from the other so-called investigations ordered by Malacañang on the other scandals it had been embroiled in. No honest to goodness investigations were called. The alleged

probes were moves taken to cover up the stench of corruption in the Arroyo government.

Presidential Management Staff chief Cerge Remonde came up with an even more hilarious statement when he claimed that the loan suspension was merely the result of internal bickerings within the World Bank.

Budget Sec. Rolando Andy, on the other hand, defensively said that the WB never said that there were irregularities in the projects. In fact, a World Bank statement particularly cited actual irregularities as the reason behind its disapproval of the two road-building projects.

AB

# Nationwide transport strike

The US-Arroyo regime tried in vain to mitigate the nationwide transport strike called by the Pagkakaisa ng mga Tsuper at Opereytor Nationwide (PISTON) on December 13 by offering free rice to would-be strikers and calling for a dialogue.

PISTON spokesperson George San Mateo said the 70% paralyzation in Metro Manila and 90% overall paralyzation of public transport nationwide demonstrated the unity between drivers and the people on the call to junk the Oil Deregulation Law, rescind the RVAT (Reformed Value Added Tax) and nationalize Petron anew.

Early on December 13, Metro Manila felt the effects of the transport strike. Members of KMU, Kadamay, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Anakpawis, Anakbayan and other allied organizations under BAYAN actively supported the drivers. Malacañang ordered various government agencies to deploy vehicles to ferry commuters in an attempt to foil the strike. Anti-riot policemen armed with high-powered firearms were also sent to "choke points" or "strike

centers" to terrorize the people, citing alleged plans by the striking drivers and their activist allies to create disturbance.

STARTER (Southern Tagalog Region Transport Organization) led a successful strike in Southern Tagalog. In Camarines Norte and Sur, Albay and Sorsogon, public transport was 100% paralyzed, according to the Concerned Drivers and Operators (CONDOR)-PISTON-Bicol. Members of Metro-Baguio PISTON in Northern Luzon also joined the strike.

Public transport was more than 95% paralyzed in Iloilo City and in Iloilo, Aklan and Capiz provinces on December 12 and 13. According to the Iloilo City Alliance Drivers' Association and PISTON-Panay, it was but right for them to join the strike since an ordinary driver spends about ₱700 for gas; ₱500 as

"boundary" for the jeepney owner; and ₱150 for food expenses while driving. This is aside from fines and other penalties for traffic violations. Drivers get to take home only ₱80 daily out of an average income of ₱1,500 per day.

In Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, 7,000 units under the United Negros Drivers and Operators Center and the Federation of Bacolod City Drivers Association effected a 96% paralyzation from December 13-14. The strike impacted on economic and political activities in the nearby cities of Silay and Talisay.

On the other hand, PISTON allies TRANSMISSION, TIRES and STAREX (Solidarity of Transport Alliance in Region X) announced a 95% paralyzation of public transport in Davao City, Compostela Valley, Davao Oriental, General Santos, Cagayan de Oro, Iligan and other cities in Northern Mindanao.

In Koronadal City, members of the Bagong Alyansa sa mga Kabus nga Opereytor ug Drayber distributed leaflets at public transport terminals.

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## People's writer passes away

Writer Rene O. Villanueva passed away on December 5 at the age of 53. Villanueva was a professor at the Department of Filipino and Philippine Literature at the University of the Philippines.

The Congress of Teachers and Educators for Nationalism and Democracy (CONTEND) at UP Diliman paid tribute to Villanueva: ... "amid so many plays, essays, researches, children's stories and other writing projects in between his tasks within and outside the university, he made time to write about and for the people." The people's writer may have passed away but his cries of struggle can still be heard thus: "*Bawat ungol ng makin-a ay halakhak ng salarin/Ng estadong kumukutya sa konsensiyang tumututol/Sa kawalang katarungan, kalayaang isinangla....*" ("Tagulaylay ng Republika (Sa SONA 2006)"). (The engine's every roar is howling laughter by the criminal/by the state that mocks the conscience that objects/to injustice, to freedom put in hock—from "The Republic's Lament [on the SONA 2006]"")

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## Maoist Indians escape

Almost 300 detained Maoist guerrillas escaped from a prison facility in Dantewada, Rajpur in Chhattisgarh state, India on December 17. Before the prison break, the detainees staged a mock disturbance to divert the guards' attention. The prisoners then overwhelmed the guards and made off with their weapons. Two hundred and ninety-nine detainees out of a total of 377 prison inmates escaped.

Two days before, guerrillas attacked a police station in Vishrampuri, Bastar, also in Chhattisgarh. The guerrillas, who were armed with AK-47 rifles and explosives set off bombs at the police station. They were only able to confiscate a revolver from an assistant sub-inspector and five night sticks from the six policemen who were killed in the fighting. In a report, *Maoist Revolution* said the meager arms seizure was due to the eastern Indian state's confiscation of policemen's weapons in several dozen detachments after successive disarming operations by Maoist guerrillas.

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